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## **Toys for Tots Goal Met; 700-Plus Children Benefit**

*Jan-12-2006*

More than 700 local children benefited from the generosity of community residents via their participation in the 2005 Toys for Tots campaign, hosted by Eastern Illinois University.

According to organizer Tony Kwiatkowski , the goal to collect more than 2,000 new and unwrapped toys was met. In fact, a total of 2,163 items were collected, surpassing last year's collection total of 1,312.

In addition, the group collected 270 used toys and 320 books. Two university student groups' fund-raising efforts resulted in more than \$600 in financial assistance, with additional monetary support from Carle Clinic Association.

Kwiatkowski, a graduate student at Eastern, spearheaded the efforts to bring the university and the Coles County area community together in order to brighten the holiday season for hundreds of youngsters. Many on-campus student organizations, along with Lake Land College and other area businesses/groups, worked together toward the year's goal.

"I was extremely happy with the support everyone provided this year," Kwiatkowski said. "The results of the Toys for Tots toy drive truly exemplified what it means to be a community. On behalf of all the families we were able to assist during the holiday season, I thank everyone who played a part in this project."

Recipients of the Toys for Tots donations were identified with help from Teen Reach, the Salvation Army, Hope United, East Hope of Central Illinois, Catholic Charities, the Oblong Christian Home , Carl Sandburg Elementary School and the Embarrass River Basin Agency.